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Itinerant Sages: The Evidence of Sirach in its Ancient Mediterranean Context*

Elisa Uusimäki

Abstract: This article examines passages in Sirach which posit that travel fosters understanding (Sir. 34:9–13) and that the sage knows how to travel in foreign lands (Sir. 39:4). The references are discussed in the context of two ancient Mediterranean corpora, i.e., biblical and Greek literature. Although the evidence in Sirach is insufficient for demonstrating the existence of a specific social practice, the text at least attests to an attitude of mental openness, imagining travel as a professional enterprise with positive outcomes. This article argues that the closest parallels to Sir. 34:9–13 and Sir. 39:4 are not to be found in the Hebrew Bible or Hellenistic Jewish literature but in (non-Jewish) Greek writings which refer to travels undertaken by the sages who roam around for the sake of learning. The shared travel motif helps to demonstrate that Sirach belongs to a wider Hellenistic Mediterranean context than just that of biblical literature.

Keywords: Sirach, sages, education, travel, mobility, Mediterranean antiquity, Second Temple Judaism, ancient Greek writings

1. Introduction

Travel or transport describe a person's movement from one location to another, typically with a specified goal, while wandering or wayfaring may not involve a particular destination.¹ Both provide the subject with liminal spaces and embodied experiences, with several possible outcomes: movement may offer a means to access new (im)material resources, enable interaction between individuals and/or shape a person through (un)expected forces, thus leading to personal development and

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¹ On the distinction between wayfaring and transport, see Tim Ingold, 'Footprints through the Weather-World: Walking, Breathing, Knowing', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16 (2010): pp. 121–39, esp. 126–27.

maturation. All this makes it natural to associate travel with the search for wisdom and knowledge.²

The book of Sirach likewise maintains that travel fosters understanding (34:9–13) and that the sage knows how to travel in foreign lands (39:4).³ While Sirach was composed in Jerusalem in the second century BCE, the wider context in which the book was received was in the broader Eastern Mediterranean region, as the work had found its way to Egypt before the end of the same century it was composed (cf. Prologue). But exactly how does Sirach fit into the larger Mediterranean context with regard to its interest in travel,⁴ a topic that has been receiving more and more attention in recent biblical and cognate studies?⁵

To answer this question, I compare Sirach's references to travel with their multiple literary contexts in the Hellenistic Mediterranean milieu. I shall argue that the concept of voluntary individual travel—the temporary move of a person from his or her home to another location—emerges, in Jewish texts, in the Hellenistic period, Sirach being one of the earliest such texts to document the phenomenon. Sirach shows an openness to pursuing wisdom through travel, imagining the sage as a wise person who does not hesitate to seek knowledge in the world rather than just in the self. Since the link between travel and learning is well-established in (non-Jewish) Greek sources but barely appears in Jewish ones, Sirach can be said to share more with the former body of works than with the latter with regard to the topic of educational travel. This

² The significance of bodily movement in the formation of knowledge has been emphasised, e.g., by Ingold, 'Footprints', pp. 121–39, esp. 121–22, 133–36.

³ Sirach 51 also speaks about the pursuit of wisdom as a kind of journey. The first acrostic poem of the chapter, known in Hebrew from 11QPs^a 21:11–22:1, refers to the young man's pursuit of wisdom (Sir. 51:13a). The second unit also begins with the image of walking (Sir. 51:18a).

⁴ For the Mediterranean as a category of research, see Nicholas Purcell and Peregrine Horden, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); William V. Harris (ed.), *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Irad Malkin, *Mediterranean Paradigms and Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2005); David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London: Allen Lane, 2011); Cyprian Broodbank, *The Making of the Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Cavan Concannon and Lindsey A. Mazurek (ed.), *Across the Corrupting Sea: Post-Braudelian Approaches to the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean* (London: Routledge, 2016). For a recent discussion of the Mediterranean in the context of biblical and cognate studies, see esp. Dennis Mizzi, 'From the Judaean Desert to the Great Sea: Qumran in a Mediterranean Context', *DSD* 24/3 (2017): pp. 378–406. See also Seth Schwartz's remarks on 'Jewish antimediterraneanism' in idem, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton, PA: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 25–44.

⁵ See esp. Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Travel in Antiquity* (TSAJ, 144; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Philip A. Harland (ed.), *Travel and Religion in Antiquity* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism, 21; Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Maren R. Niehoff (ed.), *Journeys in the Roman East: Imagined and Real* (CRPGRW, 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

observation highlights the text's participation in multiple ancient Mediterranean corpora and suggests that an a priori distinction between Jewish and Greek cultures is not helpful in the case of Sirach.⁶

2. The Evidence of Sirach

The instruction of Sirach itself is a prime example of a *writing* that travelled for the sake of wisdom and education from Jerusalem to Egypt. According to the Greek text, the anonymous grandson came to Egypt in the 38th year in the reign of Euergetes (i.e., Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II Physcon, who ruled in 170–116 BCE), which would permit the inference that he brought the text with him. Travels undertaken for the purposes of learning are further envisioned in the book.⁷ These references appear in contexts that focus on the persona and tasks of the scribe-sage, the wise person *par excellence*.

The sage imagined in Sirach enjoys a celebrated status in society (39:9–11). Practical details and ideals intermingle. Although the portrayal of the wise is idealised at times (esp. 24:30–34; 38:34b–39:8), some claims are more grounded and pertain to the sage's everyday life.⁸ Furthermore, the search for wisdom requires time, which the sage has in

⁶ On the need to get beyond such a binary distinction, see esp. Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; 2 vols.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), esp. 1:104; Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Hellenistic Culture and Society, 30; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), esp. xiv–xv; Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (The Samuel & Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies; Seattle, WA and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), esp. 180–83; Pieter B. Hartog and Jutta Jokiranta, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls and their Hellenistic Context* (DSD, 24/3; Leiden: Brill, 2017). Regarding Sirach, see esp. Theodore Middelndorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Jack T. Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom* (SBLMS, 28; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), pp. 27–59. See further at the end of the next section and in notes 20–21 below.

⁷ More broadly, the phenomenon of 'travelling manuscripts' in the Mediterranean region resulted from the rise of learning centres, especially the Library of Alexandria, founded ca. 300 BCE. The Ptolemies sought to acquire books from everywhere, especially Greek books but also some translations (cf. *Letter of Aristaeas* 9–10 and Justin, *Apology* 1.31, though the historical reliability of these accounts is questionable). Ptolemy III Euergetes even ordered an examination of every ship docked at Alexandria with the intention of making copies of books found in the ships. See Robert Barnes, 'Cloistered Bookworms in the Chicken-Coop of the Muses: The Ancient Library of Alexandria', in *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World* (ed. Roy MacLeod; New York: Tauris, 2000), pp. 61–77, esp. 65; Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (New Haven, CT: Yale Nota Bene, 2002), pp. 31–47; Sarah Culpepper Stroup, 'Without Patronage: Fetishization, Representation, and the Circulation of Gift-Texts in the Late Roman Republic', in *The Gift in Antiquity* (ed. Michael L. Satlow; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 107–21, esp. 111.

⁸ On the sage portrayed in Sirach, see, e.g., Elisa Uusimäki, 'The Formation of a Sage according to Ben Sira', in *Second Temple Jewish 'Paideia' in Context* (ed. Jason M. Zurawski and Gabriele Boccaccini;

abundance, to dedicate at his leisure to studying and teaching (34:9–13; 38:24–25). As mentioned in Sir. 34:9–13, preserved in Greek alone, his life also involves travelling:⁹

A man who has roamed (ἀνὴρ πεπλανημένος) has learned much, and a person with much experience will speak with understanding. He who had no experience knows few things, but a man who has roamed (πεπλανημένος) will increase in cleverness. I have seen many things in my wandering (ἐν τῇ ἀποπλανήσει μου), and my understanding goes beyond my words. Frequently I was in danger of death, but I was saved because of these things.

This passage contrasts with the preceding section on dreams and reality (34:1–8) and reiterates the theme of growth through trials, which runs throughout the book.¹⁰ Such tests enable a person to put his or her knowledge into practice.¹¹ Yet the passage is not fully divorced from the preceding section insofar as the Greek translator plays with the verb πλανάω, which refers in Sir. 31:7 to ‘deceptive’ dreams¹² and, in Sir. 31:9, 11–12, to the ‘roaming’ sage. As James Aitken observes, the verb aligns with the likely Hebrew verb behind the Greek text, הָפַת, which similarly could mean either ‘to mislead’ (*hifil*) or ‘to wander’ (*qal*). The wordplay points to the translator’s command of Greek and rhetorical devices.¹³ Since it appears to be based in Hebrew, the remaining Greek pericope probably had a Hebrew *Vorlage*. This does not, however, mean that the Greek version would be a verbatim translation from the Hebrew original in all respects.

While the purpose behind the sage’s travel remains unclear, the verb πλανάω suggests that the kind of movement denoted is that of roaming and wandering without a

BZNW, 228; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 59–69; eadem, ‘The Rise of the Sage in Greek and Jewish Antiquity’, *JSJ* 49/1 (2018): pp. 1–29.

⁹ The English translations of Sirach are from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (by Benjamin G. Wright III), slightly altered.

¹⁰ Núria Calduch-Benages, ‘Trial Motif in the Book of Ben Sira with Special Reference to Sir 2,1–6’, in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research* (ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 135–51, esp. 145–47, 150.

¹¹ Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes by Patrick W. Skehan. Introduction and Commentary by Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M.* (1st Yale University Press Impression; The Anchor Yale Bible, 39; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 409.

¹² Sir. 31:7a reads: ‘For dreams have deceived many’ (πολλοὺς γὰρ ἐπλάνησεν τὰ ἐνόπνια).

¹³ The same is shown in the Greek text by the alliteration of the letter *pi* throughout the passage; see James K. Aitken, ‘The Literary and Linguistic Subtlety of the Greek Version of Sirach’, in *Texts and Contexts of the Book of Sirach / Texte und Kontexte des Sirachbuches* (ed. Gerhard Karner et al.; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017), pp. 115–40, esp. 137–39.

particular goal.¹⁴ The sage is further supposed to learn from his travels; despite the sometimes negative connotations of *πλανάω*, the verb here designates a practice that contributes to one's knowledge, which aligns with its typical meaning in the middle voice, 'to wander' or 'to travel abroad'.¹⁵ Finally, the abrupt change from third to first person in the middle of the section is unexpected, emphasising the writer's experience and authority in his discussion of the double nature of travels: they are a source of wisdom but involve dangers and hardships,¹⁶ the latter of which may include thirst (26:12), stormy seas (33:2) and unpleasant fellow travellers (8:15; 36:31; 42:3).¹⁷

The second reference to the travelling sage appears in 39:4, which also survives only in Greek:

He will serve among nobles and appear in front of rulers. He will travel
(διελεύσεται) in the land of foreign nations, for he has tested the good and the bad
in people.

The immediate context of this verse highlights the sage's erudite setting: it contrasts the life of the ideal scribe, which requires wide-ranging studies and societal positions (38:24, 34cd–39:11), with that of an artisan, which demands particular skills (38:25–34ab). The life of the scribe-sage is elevated and involves travels to foreign lands. The beginning of the verse suggests that his travels pertain to service, perhaps as a counsellor or an advisor to rulers.¹⁸ Thus, the sage may not be travelling primarily for the sake of wisdom, but his journeys are, at any rate, imagined in this way: the travel motif is linked with his capability to distinguish good from bad. This implies that the traveller is expected to deliberate, making observations and judgements on what he encounters away from home.

¹⁴ Cf. Silvia Montiglio, *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 2: 'The two main families of words for wandering, that of *planaomai* and that of *alaomai*, express a notion of wandering as an unstructured moving around or away from a path.'

¹⁵ See, e.g., LSJ, p. 1411; BrillDAG, p. 1673.

¹⁶ The change into the first-person speaker has also been observed by Calduch-Benages, 'Trial Motif', pp. 146–47. Paul McKechnie reads this first-person account as a proof of the travel experience of a real-life figure named Ben Sira; see idem, 'The Career of Joshua Ben Sira', *JTS* 51 (2000): pp. 3–26, esp. 5. It is far from clear, however, whether these first-person accounts shed light on such a person. Rather, they seem to be to a rhetorical technique that is used to render an ideal sage; thus, Benjamin G. Wright III, 'Ben Sira on the Sage as Exemplar', in idem, *Praise Israel for Wisdom and Instruction* (JSJSup, 131; Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 165–82.

¹⁷ On bandits, see also Luke 10:29–35; on shipwrecks, see Acts 27:9–44; 2 Cor. 11:25–26.

¹⁸ Benjamin G. Wright III, 'Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature in Greek', in *Tracing Sapiential Traditions in Ancient Judaism* (ed. Hindy Najman et al.; JSJSup, 174; Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 71–88, esp. 81.

Both Sir. 34:9–13 and 39:4 mention travel in passing and attest to an attitude that one may learn helpful things through such a practice. As Benjamin Wright observes, the emphasis is not on travel *per se* but on openness.¹⁹ Although the sage’s actual knowledge and experience of the wider world are unclear, the figure acknowledges the benefits of travel and remains open to the world beyond his own setting. Such an attitude resonates with the book’s ethos, which maintains that, although wisdom settled into Jerusalem after her cosmic wanderings (24:1–12; cf. 1 En. 42:1–3), wisdom belongs to and can be found among all peoples (1:9–10): ‘The Lord, he... poured her [wisdom] out upon all his works, among all flesh according to his giving.’

Both of Sirach’s brief sections on travel survive only in Greek, though Hebrew *Vorlagen* behind these texts are probable.²⁰ This is a useful reminder that this Hellenistic-era work can and should be analysed in the context of at least two ancient Mediterranean corpora, Jewish and (non-Jewish) Greek writings. In other words, we should take seriously the possibility that the text resists the idea of Judaism and Hellenism as mutually exclusive categories.²¹ Although one occasionally still comes across the phrase ‘Judaism and Hellenism’, many scholars have shown that such a dichotomy neither illuminates nor does right to the social realities in the ancient Mediterranean region where cultural interaction was pervasive and the intermingling of cultures a commonplace.²²

¹⁹ Benjamin G. Wright III, ‘Hellenization and Jewish Identity in the Deuterocanonical Literature’, in *Canonicity, Setting, Wisdom in the Deuterocanonals: Papers on the Jubilee Meeting of the International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books* (ed. Géza G. Xeravits et al.; DCLS, 22; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), pp. 29–64, esp. 34. Wright also comments on the reliability of the references: ‘While too much autobiographical hay is often made of the first-person speeches in the book, there is every reason to think that Ben Sira traveled outside of Palestine.’

²⁰ As discussed above, a Hebrew original is very likely at least in the case of Sir. 34:9–13. The Hebrew text seems to have played with the verb *תעה*, which means both ‘to mislead’ (*hifil*) or ‘to wander’ (*qal*). This would explain why the translator chose to employ the verb *πλανάω* with a similar double meaning. The Greek verb enabled him to communicate the wordplay: it refers to ‘deceptive’ dreams (Sir. 31:7) and to the ‘roaming’ sage (Sir. 31:9, 11–12). See Aitken, ‘Literary and Linguistic Subtlety’, pp. 137–39.

²¹ See esp. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras*, pp. 7–34; Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 170–71. Middendorp detects innumerable parallels between Ben Sira and Greek authors, but many of them remain contested; see the critique of Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*; and that of Hans Volker Kieweler, *Ben Sira zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Th. Middendorp* (BEATAJ, 30; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992).

²² Any ‘pure Hellenism’ never existed. Instead, the very idea of ‘Hellenism’ always implies a fusion of Greek and local cultures, as was shown already by Johann Gustav Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (2nd ed.; Gotha: Perthes, 1877–1878). Droysen’s work is illuminating regarding the nature of Hellenism but problematically assumes Hellenism to serve as a link between classical Greece and the rise of Christianity. On the reception of Droysen’s work, see, e.g., Arnaldo Momigliano, ‘J. G. Droysen between

3. Jewish Mobility in Antiquity

In the Hebrew Bible, two key events in the Israelite narrative, the Exodus and the Babylonian exile, concern involuntary mobility.²³ There are also well-known tales of individuals' movement: Abraham receives a divine command to leave Haran and go to Canaan (Gen. 12:1–9), Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelite/Midianite merchants who take him to Egypt (Gen. 37:12–36), and the book of Ruth tells about economic migrants (Ruth 1:1–3, 6–18). The motif of wandering is further present in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise as well as in Cain's consignment to a life of wandering.²⁴

Nevertheless, mobility is rarely voluntary and is typically mentioned in passing, if at all (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:4), regardless of whether it occurred due to migration prompted by famine, business transactions, military duty, pilgrim festivals²⁵ or family visits. Moreover, there is some textual as well as limited archaeological evidence for major highways, Via Maris and the King's Highway, which passed through Palestine, in addition to references to seafaring and merchandise.²⁶ The sparsity of evidence is not surprising, since ancient Israel was not a maritime nation (yet note the story of Jonah, esp. Jonah 1:3, and the thanksgiving related to seafaring in Ps 107:23–32).

In the Second Temple era, the travel motif finds its way into multiple literary contexts. Apocalyptic texts such as 1 Enoch narrate otherworldly journeys,²⁷ while Philo of

Greeks and Jews', *History and Theory* 9/2 (1970), pp. 139–53; Ian S. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 11–36. Later studies that similarly understand Hellenism as a process of cultural collaboration include, e.g., Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*; Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*; Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*; Peter Thonemann, *The Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Levine (*ibid.*, pp. 27–28) explains that Hellenism involved selective adoption of new ideas, mores, or institutions. Since nearly all Jewish groups were affected by Hellenism to some extent, scholars should avoid making simple yes/no claims and, instead, 'formulate more subtle distinctions, determining how much, in which areas, and at what pace these changes took place'.

²³ Attitudes towards exile remain ambivalent, ranging from the lament of Psalm 137 to Jeremiah's exhortation to seek the welfare of the city in exile (Jer. 29:7, 28); see Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 4–5.

²⁴ Gruen, *Diaspora*, p. 1.

²⁵ See esp. Ex. 23:14; 34:23–24; Deut. 16:16; Luke 2:41–42.

²⁶ On highways, see Ex. 13:17; Num. 20:17; Judg. 21:19; Isa. 8:23; on seafaring and merchandise, see esp. Judg. 5:17; 1 Kgs 9:26–28, 10:10, 10:22; 2 Chr. 9:27–28; Isa. 23:1–8; Ezek. 27:1–36; Philip J. King, 'Travel, Transport, Trade', *Eretz-Israel* 26 (1999): pp. 94–105; Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), pp. 176–200.

²⁷ Esp. 1 Enoch 1–36. On the geographical aspect of Enoch's travel accounts, see Kelley Coblenz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19: 'No One Has Seen What I Have Seen'* (JSJSup, 81;

Alexandria depicts philosophical ascents of the mind that involve the observation of both sense-perceptible and noetic worlds.²⁸ Meanwhile, there is increasing evidence of real-life travels and the use of the travel motif in narrative texts. Trips to foreign lands begin to be mentioned in writings that are typically pseudo-historical and novelistic in character.²⁹ Joseph and Aseneth describes Joseph's tour in Egypt, for example, and the book of Tobit centres on Tobias's trip from Nineveh to Rages.³⁰ The Jewish diaspora experience was geographically diverse, necessarily involving travels in many directions.³¹ As a result, pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem also gained in popularity.³² Travel can be further linked with the references to the Maccabees' military

Leiden: Brill, 2003). For general discussion on mystical ascents and cosmic journeys in various religious traditions, see John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane, *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995). Regarding texts from Jewish and Christian antiquity, see esp. Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); eadem, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁸ See the reference list in Sami Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria* (SPhiloM, 7; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), p. 54n187 (see also the discussion on pp. 53–57). Such cosmic journeys highlight that space is not 'just an attribute of the physical landscape'. So, Mary W. Helms, *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance* (Princeton, PA: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 8–9. Among the vast amount of literature on space, see esp. Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996).

²⁹ See esp. Hezser, *Jewish Travel in Antiquity*; Harland, *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*. This aligns with the importance of travel in non-Jewish Hellenistic novels and adventure stories; see Tomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), p. 3.

³⁰ Tobit pays a guide to help Tobias on his way (Tob. 5:1–16) and blesses the travellers (Tob. 5:17).

³¹ In the late second century BCE, assuming 1 Macc. 15:22–23 gives an accurate account, Jews lived in Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, the Iranian plateau, Asia Minor, the Aegean Islands, parts of mainland Greece, Crete, Cyprus and Cyrene. Cf. Philo, *Legat.* 281–84 on the breadth of Jewish settlement, including 'the countries beyond the Euphrates', Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, Pamphylia, Cilicia, most of Asia up to Bithynia and the corners of Pontus [the Black Sea area], as well as several places in Europe: Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aetolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth, parts of Peloponnese and the islands of Euboea, Cyprus and Crete. Philo omits Italy and the North African settlements in Cyrenaica and Carthage; Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 105. See also Acts 2:5–11, which contains a long list of places from which Jews came to Jerusalem. For further discussion on Jewish diaspora communities, see Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Méléze Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt from Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian Joseph* (trans. Robert Cornman; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*; Jack N. Lightstone, 'Migration and the Emergence of Greco-Roman Diaspora Judaism', in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, pp. 187–211.

³² Cf. Deut. 16:16. See Susan Haber, 'Going up to Jerusalem: Pilgrimage, Purity, and the Historical Jesus', in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, pp. 49–67. On Herod the Great's role in restoring the temple in Jerusalem, see, e.g., Duane W. Roller, *The Building Program of Herod the Great* (Berkeley, CA:

campaigns and the Hasmoneans' diplomatic travels (esp. 1 Macc. 8:17–19, 11:60; 2 Macc. 4:11, 8:1).³³

Even so, travel is nearly absent from texts that are primarily concerned with wisdom and education.³⁴ According to Deut. 4:6, which originates from late Deuteronomistic hands,³⁵ laws serve as proof of Israel's wisdom in the eyes of other nations, which, together with the concern about being influenced by one's immediate neighbours,³⁶ suggests that the nation of Israel was somewhat insular in the early Persian period.³⁷ Another text worthy of consideration is the myth of Babel's tower, in which God confuses the language of the people so that they cannot understand one another's speech (Gen. 11:1–9). This resonates with the idea that nations have their own languages and are meant to live separately from each other. Yet the tone is not hostile: the myth explains the situation—why people speak multiple languages—just as the preceding account on Noah's descendants (Gen. 10:5, 32) explains how nations emerged and ended up living in different places.

Nevertheless, Jewish texts in general and wisdom texts in particular did not emerge in a vacuum. An awareness of the international character of seeking wisdom permeates the

University of California Press, 1998), pp. 174–82. A key source regarding pilgrimage to Jerusalem is the Letter of Aristeas. Here, Aristeas travels from Alexandria to Jerusalem to meet the high priest Eleazar. His impressions of Jerusalem (Arist. 83–120) resemble an ancient tourist's description (cf. Pausanias's *Periegesis*); Hezser, *Jewish Travel*, pp. 199–201. Eleazar further selects the translators of the scriptures who journey from Jerusalem to Alexandria (Arist. 172–73), though the trip itself is never described. There is also some evidence to suggest that pilgrimage was directed towards the Jewish temple in Elephantine, which existed from the seventh to the fifth century BCE; Wayne O. McCready, 'Pilgrimage, Place, and Meaning Making by Jewish in Greco-Roman Egypt', in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, pp. 69–81.

³³ Hezser, *Jewish Travel*, p. 209. The Maccabees are also depicted as escaping to mountains and deserts to hide from their enemies (1 Macc. 2:27–30; 2 Macc. 5:27). However, the idea that the Hasmoneans undertook wars of conquest to reclaim the Promised Land is now challenged by Katell Berthelot, who argues that the land discourse in 1 Maccabees echoes the Hellenistic rhetoric of property rights. See Berthelot, *In Search of the Promised Land? The Hasmonean Dynasty between Biblical Models and Hellenistic Diplomacy* (JAJSup, 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018).

³⁴ Notice that Hebrew wisdom discourses employ *דָּרַךְ* as a metaphor (e.g., Ps 1; Prov 1–9; 4Q525 frag. 2 ii). See Markus Zehnder, *Wegmetaphorik im Alten Testament: Eine semantische Untersuchung der alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Weg-Lexeme mit besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer metaphorischen Verwendung* (BZAW, 268; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), esp. 294–384.

³⁵ Deut. 4:5–6 is a late parenthetic addition, which emphasises that Israel is appreciated by other nations due to obeying laws, not due to its number or political importance; Timo Veijola, *Das fünfte Buch Mose: Deuteronomium. Kapitel 1, 1–16, 7* (ATD, 8/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), pp. 109–11.

³⁶ See esp. Deut. 4:19; 7:1–5; 12:29–31; 13:1–6; 17:2–4; 18:9–14; Ezra 9:1–2, 10–15; Neh. 13:23–31.

³⁷ On the isolationist sentiment in the post-exilic redaction of Deuteronomy, see, e.g., Thomas C. Römer, 'The Current Discussion on the so-called Deuteronomistic History: Literary Criticism and Theological Consequences', *Humanities* 46 (2015): pp. 43–66, esp. 60–61.

books of Job, Proverbs and Qoheleth.³⁸ Job makes metaphorical use of the imagery of caravans and their hopeless search for water (Job 6:15–20), while the later Wisdom of Solomon, composed in Greek, contains a poetic reflection on seafaring and its dangers as well as divine assistance (Wis. 14:1–11).³⁹ Another source worthy of consideration is the Letter of Aristeas: the text does not focus on wisdom per se, but maintains that one may learn from both written texts and personal experiences (Arist. 2).⁴⁰

Despite the generally cosmopolitan nature of wisdom, there are no explicit references to figures who travel to gain and/or spread wisdom in Jewish sources.⁴¹ The closest to such a mention are the itinerant teachers of Judah briefly noted in 2 Chr. 17:7–9: Josaphat's officials had 'the book of the Torah' and 'went around through all the cities of Judah and taught the people'. Ezra is a migrant teacher who returns from Babylon to instruct the precepts of the Torah to Israel (Ezra 7:1–10). However, neither Ezra nor the itinerant teachers of Judah set out to learn from others; they rather embark on journeys to spread their own knowledge.⁴² Although sages who travel for the sake of attaining wisdom are absent from the Hebrew Bible, the corpus reveals the other side of the coin with the

³⁸ This is suggested, e.g., by the influence of Egyptian texts on Proverbs and Sirach, the impact of Greek culture on Ben Sira/Sirach and Qoheleth and the foreign setting of the book of Job. Regarding Proverbs and Egyptian literature, see Nili Shupak, *'No Man is Born Wise': Ancient Egyptian Wisdom Literature and its Contact with Biblical Literature* (The Biblical Encyclopaedia Library, 32; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2016). Similar awareness is reflected in other ancient Near Eastern wisdom texts; see Miriam Lichtheim, *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context: A Study of Demotic Instructions* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis, 52; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1983), p. 106.

³⁹ Sailing is further mentioned, albeit in passing, in Pseudo-Phocylides 25, 160.

⁴⁰ The claim that it is great 'always both to increase learning and to make progress' might cite a lost/missing tragedy, due to its resemblance to Sophocles' fragments 779 and 622. So, André Pelletier, *Lettre d'Aristée à Philocrate: introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes, index complet des mots grecs* (SC, 89; Paris: Cerf, 1962), p. 101; Benjamin G. Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas: 'Aristeas to Philocrates' or 'On the Translation of the Law of the Jews'* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), pp. 99, 103.

⁴¹ Regarding the wider ancient Near Eastern tradition, notice that Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, is said to have known more than anyone else and gone to the end of the earth (*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet 1.1–2). The association between wisdom and kingship was common in the ancient Near East, and its influence is seen in ancient Israelite and early Jewish thought (esp. Deut. 17:18–19; 1 Kgs 5:9–14; Prov. 1:1; Qoh. 1:1; Wis. 6:22–9:18). See Ronald F.G. Sweet, 'The Sage in Akkadian Literature: A Philological Study', in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 45–66, esp. 51–57; Judith H. Newman, 'The Democratization of Kingship in Wisdom of Solomon', in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman; JSJSup, 83; Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 309–28; Jonathan More, 'On Kingship in Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon', in *Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint* (ed. Johann Cook and Hermann-Josef Stipp; VTSup, 157; Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 409–25.

⁴² Note also Samuel, an itinerant prophet who dispenses justice (1 Sam. 7:16–17).

figure of the wise king Solomon, to whom people came and travelled from around the world for answers to their questions and the king's wise words (1 Kgs 3:16–28; 5:14).⁴³

The social practice of travel receives more attention in Jewish and Christian texts from the early Common Era. Josephus mentions military and administrative trips, as well as travels made by aristocratic people and their messengers within the Roman Empire.⁴⁴ The Acts of the Apostle and the Letters of Paul, in turn, shed light on the Mediterranean travels of Jesus's early followers.⁴⁵ Again, the primary focus is on promoting one's own businesses or message (1 Cor. 1:20–25). This does not, however, mean that the traveller could not be accommodating and thus make use of 'local businesses'. In particular, Paul is described as taking up local philosophical traditions when he speaks to the Athenian audience at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22–29).⁴⁶ Furthermore, the pilgrimage of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) shows that one's travel to Jerusalem could be imagined as having educational and transformative outcomes.

Philo of Alexandria reflects on the pedagogical merits of travel in further detail.⁴⁷ The travel motif appears in Philo's philosophical writings with fluctuating attitudes towards

⁴³ After 70 CE, Jews travelled to rabbis for litigation or advice; Hezser, *Jewish Travel*, pp. 383–85.

⁴⁴ See Hezser, *Jewish Travel*, pp. 209–13. Josephus's brief and tendentious account on his experience among different philosophical schools (*Life* 10–12) might furthermore count as a metaphorical journey. Since Josephus does not comment on the educational value of his journey, Maren Niehoff explains that 'his exposure to different philosophies may be nothing more than a motion one has to go through as a member of the elite'. Instead, Josephus's 'real learning derives from life and political involvement rather than from philosophical instruction'. Notice that the same motif of an educational journey appears in Justin Martyr's narration concerning his wandering from one philosophy to another (*Dialogue with Trypho* 1–9). See Niehoff, 'Parodies of Educational Journeys in Josephus, Justin Martyr, and Lucian', in *Journeys in the Roman East*, pp. 203–24, esp. 206–10.

⁴⁵ Esp. Acts 9–28; Rom. 15:19, 22–33; 2 Cor. 7:5; 11:25–27. See, e.g., Loveday C.A. Alexander, "'In Journeying Often": Voyaging in the Acts of the Apostles and in Greek Romance', in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* (ed. C.M. Tuckett; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 17–49; Ryan S. Schellenberg, "'Danger in the Wilderness, Danger at Sea": Paul and the Perils of Travel', in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, pp. 141–61; Timothy Luckritz Marquis, *Transient Apostle: Paul, Travel, and the Rhetoric of Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013). Moreover, the rabbinic evidence for mobility is abundant, as shown by Hezser in her *Jewish Travel in Antiquity*.

⁴⁶ The author's agenda as expressed in Paul's speech at the Areopagus is debated. For different readings, see, e.g., Loveday C.A. Alexander, *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (LNTS, 298; London: T&T Clark, 2005), p. 197, who argues that the section 'tends towards the recognition that the Zeus of the Greek poets and philosophers is the same as the creator whom Paul proclaims'; C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 27–41, esp. 40, where Rowe claims that the speech 'articulates a rival conceptual scheme' rather than 'translating the gospel into pagan philosophical terms'. More broadly on the question of proselytising in the Mediterranean antiquity, see, e.g., Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

⁴⁷ In addition to the discussion below, note that Philo describes his journey to meet Gaius Caligula in Rome in *Legatio ad Gaium*. Although the trip's goal is political in nature, it might have shaped Philo's

the topic of travel.⁴⁸ In *Agr.* 23–25, Philo presents the travelling of masses in contrast to the cultivation of the soul, yet not all his comments are entirely negative. In *Migr.* 216–18 Philo, commenting on Gen. 12:6, describes how merchants ‘cross the seas and compass the wide world’ to make a profit. Likewise, those who strive to attain wisdom should not shy away from the dangers and challenges of a voyage nor from exploration of the Earth. Furthermore, in *Abr.* 65, Philo mentions how some travel for the sake of trade, embassies or ‘their love of culture to see the sights of a foreign land’. Thus, travel may contribute to financial gains, benefit one’s country and its interests or enable one in the acquisition of new knowledge, which provides the soul with ‘pleasure and profit’.⁴⁹ In *Praem.* 18–19, Philo explains that a person willing to master his or her own passions must be ready to escape one’s home and country, adding a passing remark on the positive effects of travel: ‘Many persons in fact have come to a wiser mind by leaving their country.’⁵⁰

In sum, travel is not a major topic in the Hebrew Bible, though it sometimes recounts narratives about migration and other forms of involuntary mobility, but the motif occurs occasionally in Jewish texts from the Hellenistic period. The situation changes after the turn of the era: in the writings of Philo, Josephus and Paul, travel is a more common trope. When Sirach’s references to travel are explored in the context of these writings, it becomes clear that they differ in two respects. First, these Jewish texts tend, unlike Sirach, to depict journeys with specific destinations rather than general wanderings. Second, apart from Philo, who writes in the early first century CE, no other Jewish text

intellectual position, as argued by Maren R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), who traces Philo’s intellectual development from an Alexandrian exegete to a diplomat. According to Niehoff, the journey to Rome in 38 CE exposed Philo to a new cultural and philosophical environment, resulting in a creative reconstruction of his identity.

⁴⁸ In addition, Philo’s philosophical writings contain metaphorical travel imagery concerning life as a voyage, travel experience, curiosity and sea journeys; see Hezser, *Jewish Travel*, pp. 199, 202–4.

⁴⁹ Philo even states that ‘the stay-at-home is to the travelled as the blind are to the keen-sighted’. The claims are striking considering the immediate context, which does not focus on the benefits of travel but rather on its disadvantages; the context praises Abraham who was willing to follow God’s commandment to migrate, though banishment is a major form of punishment for criminals (cf. *Abr.* 64), and travellers often long for ‘their native soil’.

⁵⁰ The English translation is from Philo of Alexandria, *On the Special Laws, Book 4. On the Virtues. On Rewards and Punishments* (trans. F.H. Colson; LCL, 341; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 323. This passage offers an allegorical interpretation of Gen. 5:24, telling how Enoch walked faithfully with God until God took him away (cf. *Praem.* 16). For Philo, Enoch’s removal from this world is an allegory for salvation; see Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation*, p. 175. Regarding ‘philosophical withdrawals’, see also *De vita contemplativa* where Philo describes the life of the Therapeutae who escape the city and relocate to Lake Mareotis (*Contempl.* 18–23); Elisa Uusimäki, ‘Local and Global: Philo of Alexandria on the Philosophical Life of the Therapeutae’, *Henoch* 40/2 (2018): in press.

depicts travel as a practice that enables learning and contributes to one's wisdom. The sources imply, rather, that travel primarily takes place to promote one's own point of view, though such an enterprise may involve cultural synthesis (cf. Acts 17).

4. Travelling for the Sake of Wisdom in Greek Writings

Travel is a prominent theme in Greek literature, including works of historiography, geography, epic poetry and narrative,⁵¹ and it was a natural part of the ancient world, since merchants sailed between the major seaports of the Eastern Mediterranean region around 500 BCE and most Greek city-states were founded along the coast. Inland, key centres were linked by common road networks, for which carts and beasts of burden were available for transportation.⁵² Travel was expensive but essential for warfare, diplomacy, trade and social life. Greeks visited religious sites, festivals and health-related sanctuaries, and travelling actors were known for organising theatre performances in various locations.⁵³

⁵¹ Maria Pretzler, *Pausanias: Travel Writing in Ancient Greece* (London: Duckworth, 2007), p. 45. The most comprehensive analysis of the motif of travel is Montiglio's *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture*. See also Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1974); Silvia Montiglio, 'Wandering Philosophers in Classical Greece', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 120 (2000): pp. 86–105; Colin Adams and Ray Laurence (ed.), *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001); Colin Adams and Jim Roy (ed.), *Travel, Geography and Culture in Ancient Greece, Egypt and the Near East* (Leicester Nottingham Studies in Ancient Society, 10; Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007); Richard Hunter and Ian Rutherford (ed.), *Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture: Travel, Locality and Pan-Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Maria Pretzler, 'Travel and Travel Writing', in *The Oxford Handbook of Hellenic Studies* (ed. George Boys-Stones et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 352–63.

⁵² Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, pp. 56–57, 65. Although travel increased over the course of time, there was already travel in the archaic period. On early mobility between Greece and the East, see Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (trans. Margaret E. Pinder and Walter Burkert; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), who argues that there were migrant craftsmen from the Levant and even Mesopotamia in the area around the Aegean Sea in the 'orientalising period', i.e., 750–650 BCE. Although the travelling craftsmen played a key role in the transmission of skills and objects, trade and diplomatic exchange also served as means of it, as noted by Martin Bernal, 'Burkert's Orientalizing Revolution', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 4/2 (1996), pp. 137–47, esp. 140.

⁵³ See, e.g., Susan Alcock and Robin E. Osborne (ed.), *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Matthew Dillon, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1997); Jás Elsner and Ian Rutherford (ed.), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Peregrine Horden, 'Travel Sickness: Medicine and Mobility in the Mediterranean from Antiquity to the Renaissance', in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, pp. 179–99; Steven Muir, 'Religion on the Road in Ancient Greece and

Attitudes towards travel are ambivalent in the extant literary sources. On the one hand, wandering was the cause of anxiety and fear. Odysseus, upon his return home to Ithaca, expresses his thankfulness to the swineherd Eumaeus, with whom Odysseus is allowed to stay, as follows: ‘Nothing is more evil than roaming (πλαγκτοσύνης) for mortals’ (*Odyssey* 15.343).⁵⁴ Hence, though travel is of value in the Homeric epic (see more below), wandering was also associated with dislocation, ignorance and dispossession, because it meant separation from one’s familiar setting, family and *polis*.⁵⁵ Furthermore, travel was strenuous and dangerous due to bandits and stormy seas.⁵⁶ At the same time, as a necessary aspect of life, travel evoked positive connotations, since it served as a means to obtain resources otherwise unavailable. The transitory state further enabled a different mood and allowed one to observe oneself, or others, from a distinctive vantage point, which could lead to transformative experiences.⁵⁷

Travelling is recognised as a means to acquire knowledge already in Homeric epic. The *Odyssey* is a tale of one man’s travel home to Ithaca over ten years; the protagonist had originally embarked on the journey reluctantly and thus longs to return home.⁵⁸ Odysseus is introduced as one gains personally from his travels:⁵⁹ ‘Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose minds he learned (πολλῶν δ’ ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω)’ (*Odyssey* 1.3–4).⁶⁰ Thus, apart from the connotations of deception and suffering, wandering has a layer of learning.

Rome’, in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, pp. 29–47; J. Rasmus Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng (ed.), *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵⁴ Trans. A.T. Murray (LCL, 105), slightly altered.

⁵⁵ Montiglio, *Wandering*, p. 263. See, e.g., Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.70.4–5, which contrasts Athenians with Spartans (trans. C.F. Smith; LCL, 108): ‘They stir abroad, while you are perfect stay-at-homes; for they expect by absence from home to gain something, while you are afraid that, if you go out after something, you may imperil even what you have.’ In Homeric epic, too, wandering is seen as a punishment for transgressions against the gods. The Stoic and Neoplatonic readings interpreted Odysseus’s wandering as an allegory for the mortal condition of a human being. See Montiglio, *Wandering*, pp. 47, 120. Travel could also be tantamount to exile. So, Tim Whitmarsh, ‘“Greece is the world”: Exile and Identity in the Second Sophistic’, in *Being Greek under Roman Rule: Cultural Identity, The Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (ed. Simon Goldhill; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 269–305.

⁵⁶ Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, pp. 66–67.

⁵⁷ Montiglio, *Wandering*, p. 263.

⁵⁸ François Hartog, *Memories of Odysseus: Frontier Tales from Ancient Greece* (trans. Janet Lloyd; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), pp. 15–16. Travel is also significant in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which is dependent on the literary precedent of Homer and depicts Aeneas’s flight from Troy to Italy.

⁵⁹ Pretzler, *Pausanias*, p. 37.

⁶⁰ Trans. A.T. Murray (LCL, 104). Cf. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet 1.1–2, which states that Gilgamesh knew more than anyone else and went to the end of the earth, as discussed in note 41 above.

Herodotus (ca. 484–425 BCE), the early historian and the world’s first travel writer, journeyed for the sake of his love of travelling.⁶¹ Unlike Odysseus, he did not travel to get back home but to make inquiries, broaden his mental horizon and satisfy his intellectual needs.⁶² In the *Persian Wars*, Herodotus also mentions famous figures of the past who travelled in their pursuit of knowledge: Solon, the Athenian statesman and legislator (640–558 BCE), was the first philosopher to wander around, visiting Amasis in Egypt and Croesus in Sardis. In Sardis, the Lydian king famously poses the following question to Solon regarding his travel experience:⁶³

Our Athenian guest, we have heard much of you, by reason of your wisdom and your wanderings (καὶ σοφίης εἵνεκεν τῆς σῆς καὶ πλάνης), how you have travelled far to seek knowledge and to see the world (ὥς φιλοσοφῶν γῆν πολλὴν θεωρίης εἵνεκεν ἐπελήλυθας). Now, therefore, I am fain to ask you, if you have ever seen a man more blest than all his fellows. (Hdt. 1.30)⁶⁴

Solon’s wisdom and wanderings are correlated with each other here. This passage is crucial since, as Silvia Montiglio explains, ‘Solon inaugurates a tradition which eventually spreads so widely that Diogenes Laertius regards the philosopher who loathes travelling as an exception (2.22)’.⁶⁵ Herodotus also mentions Anacharsis, the Scythian sage of the sixth century BCE who travelled to Greece. ‘Having seen much of the world in his travels (ἐπεῖτε γῆν πολλὴν θεωρήσας) and given many proofs of his wisdom therein’,⁶⁶ Anacharsis returns to Scythia where he is killed for introducing Greek cults (Hdt. 4.76).⁶⁷ This reference reveals that a person’s transformative travel experience could also have tragic consequences.

Three authors of late antiquity—Diogenes Laertius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus—further maintain that Pythagoras (ca. 570–500/490 BCE) and Democritus (ca. 460–370 BCE), two other Pre-Socratics, travelled extensively because of their love for knowledge.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, p. 94; Pikoulas, ‘Travelling by Land’, p. 78.

⁶² See esp. Hdt. 1.5, on the Odyssean model underlying Herodotus’s self-presentation; Montiglio, ‘Wandering Philosophers’, p. 89; eadem, *Wandering*, p. 129.

⁶³ Pretzler, *Pausanias*, p. 37.

⁶⁴ Trans. A.D. Godley (LCL, 117).

⁶⁵ Montiglio, ‘Wandering Philosophers’, p. 88. On Solon’s travels, see also Plutarch, *Solon* 25–28; Diog. Laert. 1.113.

⁶⁶ Trans. A.D. Godley (LCL, 118).

⁶⁷ Montiglio, ‘Wandering Philosophers’, pp. 88–89.

⁶⁸ See also Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* 1.96.1–3 on the Greeks’ visits to Egypt to familiarise themselves with Egyptian customs and learning; Montiglio, ‘Wandering Philosophers’, p. 88. Jews were sometimes presented by Greeks as ‘wise men of the East’; Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton, PA: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 311–14. See also the primary sources in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), p. 1:10 (Theophrastus), p. 1:46 (Megasthenes), and p. 1:50 (Clearchus).

Democritus is said to have visited Egypt, the Red Sea and Persia, perhaps even India and Aethiopia (Diog. Laert. 9.35–36). He wandered all over the known lands and listened to learned men.⁶⁹ Pythagoras, in turn, toured the East to acquire wisdom from the Egyptians, Hebrews, Phoenicians, Arabians, Chaldeans and the Persian Magi, all of whom possessed some desirable expertise: Egyptians in geometry, Hebrews in dreams, Chaldeans in numbers and Phoenicians in astronomy (Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 6–19).⁷⁰ Pythagoras thus collected, as it were, the various wisdoms of the world.

Views of an itinerant lifestyle are more ambiguous in philosophical sources from the classical and Hellenistic eras. Travel was an essential part of the professional activity of sophists who wandered, teaching willing interlocutors and showing off their knowledge. They moved around exchanging their knowledge and skills for monetary profit (e.g., Plato, *Sophist* 224c1–2), but their nomadic lifestyle created negative connotations of verbal deceptions, greed and homeless ignorance (e.g., Plato, *Timaeus* 19e2–8).⁷¹

By contrast, Socrates, as Plato portrays him, is constantly walking around and talking, but he loathes travel and scorns the sophists' itinerancy.⁷² While Plato himself claims to have hated his own Sicilian wandering,⁷³ his legacy preserved him as a famous traveller: Cicero, for instance, admires Plato's trips to 'the remotest parts of the earth', undertaken because of his 'passion for learning' (*On Ends* 5.19).⁷⁴

of Soli). On the late antique fascination with 'Eastern wisdoms', see Guy G. Stroumsa, *The Scriptural Universe of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. 97–107.

⁶⁹ Democritus says of himself the following (DK 68 B 299): 'I, among my contemporaries, wandered most over the earth, inquiring the farthest things. I saw most skies and lands and heard most learned men.' The text and its translation are from Montiglio, 'Wandering Philosophers', p. 89.

⁷⁰ Iamblichus tells another version of Pythagoras's journey. In addition to a somewhat different itinerary, Iamblichus claims that Pythagoras spent time among different peoples and thus reached excellence in arithmetic, music and other disciplines. Eventually, he returned home to Samos, founded a school and tried to teach this knowledge to others (*Life of Pythagoras* 4–5; cf. Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 9).

⁷¹ Montiglio, 'Wandering Philosophers', pp. 93–94; eadem, *Wandering*, pp. 105–6, 117.

⁷² These sources are polemical and thus not necessarily historically reliable. On Socrates's dislike of travelling outside the city, see Plato, *Crito* 52b9–10. Diog. Laert. 2.22 notes that Socrates's dislike of travel separates him from most philosophers. The sophists' itinerancy is scorned in Plato, *Apology* 37d5–8. See Montiglio, 'Wandering Philosophers', pp. 94, 98; Montiglio, *Wandering*, p. 151.

⁷³ See Plato, *The Seventh Letter* 350d5–6; Montiglio, 'Wandering Philosophers', pp. 96–97. Plato's view of the educational value of travel remains ambivalent. His ideal wise person is a contemplative and withdrawn thinker, not concerned with the needs of his body, who values physical stillness (e.g., *Phaedo* 64e5–6; *Republic* 496d7–e2); Montiglio, *Wandering*, pp. 162, 177–78.

⁷⁴ Trans. H. Rackham (LCL, 40). Diog. Laert. 3.6 tells that Plato left Athens after Socrates's death, visiting Cyrene, Italy and Egypt. This marked a transition from political to philosophical life; Montiglio, *Wandering*, p. 155.

The notion of a nomadic lifestyle as a condition for philosophical life emerged with Diogenes the Cynic (412–323 BCE), who embraces the figure of the homeless wanderer, thus celebrating poverty and exile.⁷⁵ Despite this reputation, Diogenes is not actually known for extensive travels, and his wandering is not associated with learned inquiry but with his concept of cosmopolitanism.⁷⁶ There is some evidence, however, that the Cynics also glamorised the wandering heroes of the past.⁷⁷

The early Stoics were interested in neither travelling the world nor homelessness. The Stoic sage is a cosmopolitan, but, in contrast to the Cynic outsider, he can be a member of any society and committed to his civic duties. None of the later Stoics are, in fact, especially known for their travels. Even so, they celebrate adventurous wanderers, though also presenting critical remarks on the travels of aristocrats.⁷⁸

Mobility would grow enormously in the Roman Empire, long after Sirach, when the roads and seaways were filled with traders, armies, couriers and bureaucrats.⁷⁹ Wise figures also wandered through the Mediterranean region to obtain intellectual enrichment and to spread their teachings.⁸⁰ Apollonius of Tyana (ca. 15 CE – ca. 100

⁷⁵ See Diog. Laert. 6.38 (trans. R.D. Hicks; LCL, 185): ‘At all events he was a homeless exile, to his country dead. A wanderer who begs his daily bread.’

⁷⁶ Cf. Diog. Laert. 6.63; Montiglio, ‘Wandering Philosophers’, pp. 98–99; eadem, *Wandering*, pp. 180–203.

⁷⁷ See esp. the cynicising characterisation of Odysseus by Epictetus, recorded in Arrian’s *Discourses of Epictetus* 3.24.12–14. Epictetus even recognises the mythical hero Heracles as a cosmopolitan wanderer, since the latter had visited all the corners of the known inhabited world and was able to live happily anywhere; see Montiglio, ‘Wandering Philosophers’, pp. 100–3.

⁷⁸ See, e.g., Seneca, *Epistles* 90.43 (trans. Richard M. Gummere; LCL, 76): ‘What else but joy could it be to wander among the marvels which dotted the heavens far and wide?’ Nature allows the human body to roam (*On Benefits* 6.23.6), and there are those who ‘sail the sea and endure the hardships of journeying to distant lands for the sole reward of discovering something hidden and remote’ (*On Leisure* 5.2; trans. John W. Basore; LCL, 254). Meanwhile, Seneca criticises aristocrats who travel as a cure for discontent (*Epistles* 28); see also Horace, *Epistles* 1.11 for a criticism of travelling. Epictetus further mentions how ‘the philosophers advise us to leave even our own countries, because old habits distract us and do not allow a beginning to be made of another custom’ (*Discourses of Epictetus* 3.16.11; trans. W.A. Oldfather; LCL, 218). On the Stoic attitudes to travelling, see Montiglio, *Wandering*, pp. 204–6, 210. On Horace, see Rachel I. Skalitzy, ‘Horace on Travel (Epist. 1.11)’, *The Classical Journal* 68/4 (1973): pp. 316–21.

⁷⁹ Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, p. 127.

⁸⁰ The rise of this phenomenon, the increasing mobility of the learned people, connects with and was enabled by socio-political and cultural factors of the time. First, the unification of the Mediterranean, especially under Roman rule, made travel safer and easier. Second, the importance of one’s native city for one’s identity decreased, which resulted in more cosmopolitan self-understandings among the sages; Montiglio, ‘Wandering Philosophers’, p. 86. On the mobility of holy and wise men, see Graham Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist: Holy Men and their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London:

CE), for example, is portrayed as having travelled from the Atlantic to the Ganges.⁸¹ Aspirational youths sought Greek education in cultural centres such as Pergamon, Athens or Smyrna.⁸² Notably, the purpose was not to journey around indiscriminately but to arrive at a particular destination known for its intellectual merits and opportunities.

5. Reading Sirach in Context

Sirach mentions the travels of the sage on two occasions. Willingness to roam and explore, and so to learn, belong to the book's ethos. This can be compared to James Aitken's remarks on the symposium motif, which is invoked often in the book for pedagogical purposes. The motif guides the reader to behave well and to avoid excessive habits. The feast itself is taken for granted and not questioned; it simply serves as a framework for delineating good practice.⁸³ Similarly, the translator, and probably the author as well, accepts travelling as a part of the lifestyle of the wise person without hesitation, commenting on the topic in passing and pointing to its intent rather than questioning its appropriateness or facticity. He furthermore highlights the outcome of travelling, the discovery of new things and the gaining of knowledge, understanding and experience. Travel, then, does not refer here to forced mobility nor to the pleasure- and entertainment-seeking travels of the wealthy upper-class.

Since Sirach refers to travel only in passing, the remaining evidence is inadequate for demonstrating the existence of a specific social practice. The book does imagine travel as a professional enterprise with positive outcomes, but it remains unspecified whether

Routledge, 1994), pp. 167–77; Hartog, *Memories of Odysseus*, pp. 199–209; Philip A. Harland, 'Journeys in Pursuit of Divine Wisdom: Thessalos and Other Seekers', in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, pp. 123–40; Ian W. Scott, 'The Divine Wanderer: Travel and Divinization in Late Antiquity', in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, pp. 101–21.

⁸¹ See Philostratus of Athens, *The Life of Apollonios of Tyana*, esp. books 1–2. For a good overview of Apollonius's trips, see Christopher P. Jones, 'Introduction', in Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana, Volume I: Life of Apollonius of Tyana, Books 1–4* (ed. and trans. Christopher P. Jones; LCL, 16; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 1–30, esp. 13–17.

⁸² Pretzler, 'Travel and Travel Writing', p. 356. Pedagogical mobility is associated with the 'Second Sophistic' of the second century CE. For these erudite people, *pepaideumenoi*, travel was an ordinary aspect of life; see Maria Pretzler, 'Greek Intellectuals on the Move: Travel and *Paideia* in the Roman Empire', in *Travel, Geography and Culture in Ancient Greece, Egypt and the Near East*, pp. 123–38. The *pepaideumenoi* compared themselves to Odysseus (e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 1.50, 13.4, 45.11); *ibid.*, p. 136.

⁸³ James K. Aitken, 'Ben Sira's Table Manners and the Social Setting of His Book', in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Jarick; LHB/OTS, 618; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), pp. 418–38.

such an enterprise should take place just in one's immediate context or more broadly. Motives behind the proposed travelling are equally unclear; the brief reference in Sir. 39:4 suggests that the sage's travel is probably part of his professional service, whereas the lengthier account of travel in Sir. 34:9–13 leaves open the potential reasons behind his wandering. It is possible, therefore, that Sirach regards the gaining of wisdom and knowledge as the very purpose of travel, but it is equally possible that knowledge acquired through travel is regarded as a by-product rather than as an end in itself.

Sirach's travelling sage does not resonate with the examples provided above from the Hebrew Bible, where travel as such merits little attention and no explicit interest. Sirach's references are also rather distinctive in comparison with other Jewish texts from the Hellenistic period, as most evidence for ancient Jewish travel comes from the Roman era. First, early Jewish and the first Christian sources typically describe trips with a specified destination rather than more general wandering around and roaming, whereas Sir. 34:9–13 specifically refers to the latter form of travelling with the verb *πλανάω*.⁸⁴ Second, Jewish and Christian writings on travel in general rarely show a particular concern for wisdom or learning. When these works do so—Philo's writings are notable exceptions and obviously postdate Sirach—they depict Jews who travelled to disseminate their own wisdom and education rather than to acquire wisdom from others. These two aspects of travel are not, however, mutually exclusive in all instances, as we see, for example, in the figure of Paul, who is portrayed as adapting Greek wisdom in his speech at the Areopagus. On the other hand, Paul makes use of 'foreign' wisdom only in order to persuade his audience to take his message seriously. Thus, Paul is no different from figures such as Josaphat's officials and Ezra who travel to disseminate their own forms of wisdom.

Even though travel is not a common theme in Jewish literature from the Hellenistic era, Sirach's remarks on the topic can be fruitfully contextualised in relation to (non-Jewish) Greek conceptions of wisdom and wandering. Greek philosophers disagree about whether or not a philosopher should travel, but several philosophical and other literary sources refer to bold travels undertaken by sages and wisdom-lovers—especially historical exemplars—who roamed around for the sake of learning to expose themselves to foreign forms of wisdom and to acquire some of that mental capital for themselves. Odysseus is further depicted as a reluctant traveller who nonetheless gains knowledge over the course of his journey. Exact attitudes towards travelling differ depending on the author and type of writing in question, and the historical facticity of the accounts is far from clear in many cases, but the link between wisdom and travel is nonetheless widely established.

⁸⁴ See notes 13–14 above.

As a product of the Hellenistic era and as a text that travelled from Jerusalem to Egypt, Sirach appears to be an ancient Mediterranean composition that hails from a multicultural milieu and embodies some of the cosmopolitan ethos of that setting. The widespread presence of travelling sages in (non-Jewish) Greek writings suggests that tales about the itinerant wise circulated around the Eastern Mediterranean region in the Hellenistic period. Since the translator of Sirach employs and plays on the verb *πλανάω* (*התע* in the Hebrew original), which typically designates wandering in Greek literature, it seems likely that he, and apparently the author as well, was aware of (some) such traditions related to itinerant sages and sought to valorise their behaviour. There are two plausible explanations for the type of cultural interaction that is mirrored by the travel accounts of Sirach.

First of all, the motif of a travelling philosopher is common in Greek literature, beginning with Herodotus whose portrayal of Solon (Hdt. 1.30) inaugurates the tradition of the travelling philosopher,⁸⁵ and there is evidence to demonstrate that educational travels were a social practice in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Both the author and the translator of Sirach must have been familiar with this practice due to simply observing people's mobility. The Jerusalem-based author lived near several Hellenistic learning centres related to mobility, many of which were situated along the Mediterranean coast, and could even have gained some training in such a centre.⁸⁶ The translator, in turn, had personally travelled from Jerusalem to Egypt and probably witnessed the phenomenon of educational travel in Alexandria.⁸⁷ Accordingly, drawing on their first-hand experiences, the author and the translator presumably wished to portray the ideal Jewish sage as an itinerant figure of the Hellenistic East. This can be compared to how the Greek prologue to Sirach refers to the intended audience by the term 'lovers of learning' (*οἱ φιλομαθεῖς*). According to it, the author's grandfather not only studied ancestral books, but also wanted 'to compose something pertaining to education and wisdom' in order to provide the 'lovers of learning' with insights. The use of this term clearly connects Jewish wisdom-lovers with Greek philosophers (lit. 'lovers of wisdom') and suggests that the translator wished to highlight the image of the Jewish sage as a philosopher, a role that typically entailed travel in antiquity.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Montiglio, 'Wandering Philosophers', p. 88.

⁸⁶ Important thinkers came especially from Tyre, Sidon, and Gadara (on the latter, see Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.29); Wright, 'Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature', pp. 74, 86. For a more detailed discussion on intellectual life in Hellenistic Palestine and Phoenicia, see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, pp. 83–88.

⁸⁷ On Alexandria as a major cultural and intellectual centre with gymnasia, the mouseion and the library, see, e.g., P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), pp. 1.312–35.

⁸⁸ Cf. Montiglio, 'Wandering Philosophers', p. 88, who points out that the idea of a philosopher who dislikes travel eventually became an exception.

Second, it remains possible that Sirach's travel references result from the knowledge of non-Jewish literary sources, although there is no adequate evidence to make a claim regarding any direct literary dependence between Sirach and non-Jewish travel accounts, considering the lack of exact linguistic parallels and the uncertainty regarding the author's (and translator's) level of familiarity with Greek literature. Even so, Sirach's travel references, which evoke passages of non-Jewish texts, might be inspired by such writings. The translator, of course, had received formal Greek education, which is evident in the stylistically advanced prologue.⁸⁹ The author, too, apparently made use of certain Greek texts, Theognis's gnomic poetry in particular, even though the extent of his use of these sources remains debated in scholarship.⁹⁰ Thus, not only the translator but also the author almost certainly knew Greek beyond a basic level,⁹¹ which makes their first-hand knowledge of Greek writings on travel a distinct possibility.

If there exists a specific non-Jewish textual reference to travel with which the author of Sirach was familiar, the most likely candidate is Homeric epic.⁹² The *Odyssey* posits that Odysseus learned from his travels in foreign cities and among different people (1.3–4), even if travel is not glorified per se.⁹³ The argument that the author (or translator) might have known this passage relies primarily on the role of Homeric epic as the key pedagogical material in different levels of Greek education; any person with

⁸⁹ There is a clear contrast between the elegant style of the prologue and that of the actual translation, which tends to be isomorphic and often mirrors the Hebrew *Vorlage*; see Benjamin G. Wright III, *No Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to Its Hebrew Parent Text* (SBLSCS, 26; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989); idem, 'Translation Greek in Sirach in Light of the Grandson's Prologue', in *The Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira: Transmission and Interpretation* (ed. Jan Joosten and Jean-Sébastien Rey; JSJSup, 150; Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 75–94.

⁹⁰ See, e.g., Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras*, pp. 8–26, 33; as well as the more cautious surveys of Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*, pp. 27–59, and Wright, 'Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature', pp. 80–86. The likely dependence on Theognis's poetry concerns the theme of friendship (Sir. 6:5–17); *ibid.*, pp. 83–85. Most recently, see James E. Harding, 'Ben Sira on Friendship: Notes on Intertextuality and Method', in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom*, pp. 439–62, esp. 445n15, 447–48, 452.

⁹¹ So, Wright, 'Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature', pp. 71–88. Considering various factors—our knowledge of educational institutions in Palestine, the discovery of Greek inscriptions and of the Qumran scrolls, the composition of Jewish texts in Greek in Palestine, the knowledge of Greek literature shown by Jewish authors writing in Semitic languages, and aspects of Ben Sira's instruction that align with Hellenistic thought—Wright concludes (p. 86): '[I]t is difficult for me not to think that Ben Sira knew Greek and that he knew more than simply how to get along when he traveled.' On the authors who probably operated in Palestine and wrote in Greek (Theodotus, Philo the Epic Poet, Eupolemus), indicating that they had received 'a level of Greek education well beyond the *enkyklios paideia*', see *ibid.*, pp. 76–77, 79. See also Pieter van der Horst, 'Greek in Jewish Palestine in Light of Jewish Epigraphy', in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (ed. John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling; CJA, 13; Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), pp. 154–74, who argues for a widespread knowledge of Greek since more than half of discovered public inscriptions are in Greek.

⁹² Cf. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras*, pp. 33–34, 170.

⁹³ Pretzler, *Pausanias*, p. 37.

basic learning (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία) would have studied at least parts of it, though the use of *Iliad* as a schoolbook was admittedly more common than that of *Odyssey*.⁹⁴

The book of Tobit, which, like Sirach, was originally written in Hebrew (or Aramaic), does indeed employ the tale of Telemachus (*Odyssey* 1–4).⁹⁵ In the light of this evidence, the bearing of *Odyssey* on Sirach's travel accounts is possible. On the other hand, the sparse evidence of Homeric influence on Sirach leaves this option speculative.⁹⁶ Moreover, it should be noted that the author might have known Homeric excerpts through an anthology instead of learning them directly from reading Homer.⁹⁷

Another hypothetical source of inspiration behind Sirach's travel references is Herodotus. He travelled out of intellectual curiosity and also tells about famous figures of the past who travelled in their pursuit of knowledge (esp. Hdt. 1.5, 30; 4.76). The option is worth addressing, considering Herodotus's probable influence on another late Second Temple work that may have been translated from Hebrew, the book of Judith.⁹⁸

Despite the thematic connection to non-Jewish literature, it would be too simplistic to state that Sirach shows 'Greek influence' regarding its travel accounts. Rather, those references demonstrate how the author and the translator lived in a world where educational travel was an established literary motif and a real social practice—something in which the Jewish sage, too, was imagined to partake. It has been recently

⁹⁴ Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, PA: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 194–97. On Homer in ancient Greek pedagogy, see *ibid.*, pp. 140–42, 194–97, 204–5; Margalit Finkelberg, 'Homer as a Foundation Text', in *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (ed. Margalit Finkelberg and Guy G. Stroumsa; JSRC, 2; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 75–96.

⁹⁵ See Dennis R. McDonald, 'Tobit and the *Odyssey*', in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* (ed. Dennis R. McDonald; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), pp. 11–40; Wright, 'Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature', pp. 77–78.

⁹⁶ Linguistic resemblances suggest that the proverb in Sir. 14:18 makes use of *Iliad* 6.146–149. Sir. 14:18 reads: 'Like a sprouting leaf on a thickly leaved tree, some it sheds, but others it puts forth; so is a generation of flesh and blood, the one dies and the other is born.' This reminds one of *Iliad* 6.146–149: 'Just as are the generations of leaves, such are those also of men. As for the leaves, the wind scatters some on the earth, but the luxuriant forest sprouts others when the season of spring has come; so of men one generation springs up and another passes away.' Even so, this is the only clear indication of the Homeric text as a source for the author; Wright, 'Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature', pp. 85–86.

⁹⁷ Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras*, p. 10; Wright, 'Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature', p. 86.

⁹⁸ See Mark Stephen Caponigro, 'Judith, Holding the Tale of Herodotus', in *"No one Spoke Ill of Her": Essays on Judith* (ed. James C. VanderKam; SBLEJL, 2; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), pp. 47–59; Jeremy Corley, 'Imitation of Septuagintal Narrative and Greek Historiography in the Portrait of Holofernes', in *A Pious Seductress: Studies in the Book of Judith* (ed. Géza G. Xeravits; DCLS, 14; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 22–54, esp. 34–42; Deborah Levine Gera, *Judith* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), pp. 57–78; Wright, 'Ben Sira and Hellenistic Literature', p. 78.

stressed that Hellenism does not depict a unified phenomenon, but exists only in its 'individual manifestations'.⁹⁹ In line with such an emphasis, the detected link between travel and learning in Sirach and other Greek writings from the Mediterranean antiquity can be regarded as one such manifestation of Hellenism; they suggest that Sirach partakes in a wider Hellenistic discourse concerned with wisdom, knowledge and travel.

6. Conclusion

Sirach's references to the travelling sage are admittedly vague, but they highlight an appreciation of the practice of travel, a transitory state that enables a distinctive mood and offers opportunities for transformative experiences. The translator of Sirach, and probably the book's author as well, wanted to emphasise this aspect of travelling in line with Hellenistic attitudes towards travelling in particular and Greek culture in general. Whatever the reason, the sage portrayed in the surviving Greek text turns outward to the world without hesitation, thus suggesting an attitude of mental openness. The author, translator or both envision as a norm a world where the wise move from their immediate contexts to other places and learn from that world outside. Such travel, regardless of the motive behind it, is seen as contributing to the sage's self-formation. Ultimately, the affinity of these passages with non-Jewish literature adds support to the view that a distinction between Jewish and Hellenistic cultures is not helpful in the case of Sirach.

⁹⁹ See Pieter B. Hartog and Jutta Jokiranta, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Hellenistic Context', *DSD* 24/3 (2017): pp. 339–54, esp. 342. Somewhat similarly, the significance of starting 'Mediterranean' inquiries with the local and then building outwards has been stressed by Cavan Concannon and Lindsey A. Mazurek, 'Introduction: A New Connectivity for the Twenty-first Century', in *Across the Corrupting Sea*, pp. 1–14, esp. 10.